

# Azerbaijan Connections and Exchange Newsletter

Fall 2006

## Azerbaijani Students Reflect on 9/11 with Public Diplomacy Officer

"I think 9/11 was a wake-up call for Americans to engage with and learn about the rest of the world," wrote Elizabeth Murphy, Public Diplomacy Officer at the US Embassy in Azerbaijan. Ms. Murphy's statement was part of an online chat with nine ACE Youth Leadership Exchange participants that took place on the fifth anniversary of the attacks. Not only did her statement sum up the greatest significance of post-9/11 America, but it also illustrated the importance of these youths' upcoming visit. A few days after the chat, the participants would embark on a two-week exchange to the US (See article ACE Exchange Participants Employ Technology for Community Issues) at a time when Americans were reflecting on the past five years and that fateful day in 2001. Ms. Murphy's thoughts laid the foundation for what they would gain as they watched television with their host-families or sat in conversation late into the evening.



The youth would ask their host-families where they had been and what they had done that day and would recall that like millions around the world, Ms. Murphy had awakened to see the events on television. More importantly they would understand that the events affected people from all nations and all walks of life. Ms. Murphy explained, "The victims of the attacks came from many countries, so the fight against terrorism really is an international one."

They would view everyday life of Americans and understand the changes that had come about since 2001: the tightened security in airports, Americans' heightened interest in foreign affairs and the increased involvement of American Muslims in the social and political life of the country. "American Muslims," Ms. Murphy noted in the chat, "have become more vocal and organized since September 11."

Most of all, the youth would see what Ms. Murphy had demonstrated clearly in her conversation, that is, an openness and ease of character that welcomes millions of visitors from around the world every year.

## ACE Exchange Participants Employ Technology for Community Issues



On Friday, September 15, 2006, nine most distinguished Azeri secondary school students from Ganje, Mingchevir and Ismayilli, together with a chaperone and ACE staff member, embarked on the exchange program to the USA. The delegation traveled to Vermont for a two-week exchange a part of ACE's Youth Leadership component--focused on media education and cultural understanding to develop active members of society and a positive force for change.

During the exchange, participants stayed with host families, attended a ten-day training course on media literacy, digital storytelling, project management, community organizing and professional networking. At the conclusion of the exchange, the students took part in a three-day cultural program in Washington DC, where they presented their digital projects to US State Department officials and other distinguished guests. "It was very exiting to be there, to present our Digital Stories to so many important people. Digital Stories are the best way to attract people to solve



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problems in our community," said Turkan Nabiyeva, ACE student.

This exchange followed several months of intense online collaboration and learning among American and Azerbaijani students, facilitated by ACE staff and with participation of representatives of the US Embassy and several NGOs in Azerbaijan. 13 students actively participated in the web forums that helped them improve their English, learn about living in a host family and gain initial training for their digital stories before they even left Azerbaijan.

"Living with a Host Family" was conducted in collaboration with Alumni of US Exchange programs Sevinj Mammadova (UGRAD) and Kanan Rzayev (FLEX) who volunteered to help young participants clearly understand religion, customs and



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the educational system in the US. Both young people lived in host families for a year and had a wealth of experience to share with ACE students. Students' questions touched upon meals, clothes, lifestyle, behavior and educational system, culture, presents and sightseeing. Guests could hardly answer all the questions in the allotted time and mentioned they were pleased with the participants' curiosity <http://projectharmony.az/forum/viewforum.php?f=17&start=0&sid=be93afe93b1d60548d431d4aaa671a70>

During the "English Skills" forum that took place on July 24, Khuraman Osmanova, chaperon, conducted the grammar lessons, and later, Lizzy Hewitt, high-school student from Vermont, joined the forum to explain linguistic nuances as a native speaker. The forum helped the participants improve their language and feel more self-confident about speaking English. <http://projectharmony.az/forum/viewforum.php?f=23&sid=be93afe93b1d60548d431d4aaa671a70>

On August 21 trainer, Rob Williams, facilitated a forum to teach and support the students in developing their digital stories. The on-line lessons helped the youth produce quality digital video that told stories about issues important in their home community. Students also developed leadership skills necessary to be successful in the 21st century. <https://db.projectharmony.ru/wf/index.php?id=3059>

Concluding the exchange, participants began to design and implement collaborative leadership projects in which they demonstrated skills necessary for participation as citizens, as well as to present their experiences to their schools and communities. These presentations will take place at the end of October.

The Exchange students are now also eligible to compete for small grants (up to \$250) to support their projects' activities and events that utilize technology in unique ways to address social issues affecting their communities.

## ACE Sustainability: Working to Ensure International Education and Use of Technology in Azerbaijani Classrooms

Since June 28 when ACE met with the Minister of Education and 130 school principals, teachers, and heads of the Regional Education Departments to discuss the sustainability of the Internet Computer Centers, ACE has pressed to ensure that the schools' ICCs continued their march to sustainability. Technical knowledge represents only one aspect of a sustainable

computer center; management another. The summer meeting helped all parties involved to share success strategies for managing ICCs and the newly opened financial accounts. This was the first step in the final stage of sustainability.



Following the meeting ACE has worked with schools and the Ministry to ensure the school principals are able manage the accounts previously opened and to begin the process of setting up the remaining accounts for ACE's newest ICCs. In July the Ministry submitted orders to the financial department of the Regional Education Departments for opening the accounts. Each region submitted estimated budgets and should receive permission for the accounts by January 2007.

In November, ACE Deputy Program Director and Education Coordinator will visit the schools graduating from the program in January. The two will deliver training on the basics of financial accounting, fundraising, ICC management, and developing business plans for the Center's operations.

As the Minister of Education, Misir Mardanov, stated in his speech on June 28, "ACE has contributed significantly to the development of the educational system in Azerbaijan and the future sustainability of the project depends on the Ministry of Education." For this very reason, ACE has worked closely with the Ministry in its activities, and for this reason, the final steps to sustainability will be hand in hand with the Azerbaijani government.

## American and Azerbaijani Students Learn Advertising in a Globalizing World

Have you ever wondered how Companies can sell their products all over the world? Or how commercials change from one country to the next? On October 1 ACE in collaboration with Junior Achievement Azerbaijan launched an innovative partnership project for 200 Junior Achievement students in Azerbaijan and the

United States. In the course of the project, the students not only examine advertisements in their communities and discuss advertising strategies used by companies, but also jointly choose and create their own advertisements to suit an international market. The advertisement will take into consideration the individual tastes of the society, but will also envision a more universal appeal. All advertisements will be posted on a student generated website at the end of the project.

## ACE students plan for success

On September 29, 25 students from Baku, Mingechevir, Ali Bayramli, Ismayilli and Salyan set strategy plans for career development in the My Future Profession chat. Facilitators assisted the students in identifying goals, skills and abilities, as well as compatible occupations. Following the brainstorming session, students who had interned with Statoil, Exxon Mobil, McDermott, KCA Deutag, and Bank Nikoil through the Junior Achievement Azerbaijan Job Shadowing Program shared their personal experiences working in big business over the summer. "I learned business is not only about buying and selling goods," said Emin Mammadzade, KCA Deutag intern. "A successful company has to have a strong structure its departments." An intern with Exxon Mobil, Azer Ismayilov, commented, "Determining your future career should come from your personal desire and skills and not from somebody else. I interned at Exxon Mobil in 2005 and after that experience I made my career choice. Now I study at the Azerbaijan State Oil Academy."

ACE student, Emin Hasanov (Ali-Bayramli school # 9), responding to the experiences provided by Emin and Azer said: "The information I got in this project, helped me to believe in my knowledge and make efforts to achieve success in business. Azer & Emin helped me to understand what the world of business is and how I can be a professional in this field. This is a long way, but I will do my best to be an outstanding person in business and help others to choose their future profession like the mentors helped me".

One expectation of the project is that it will encourage students to seek out internships in order to learn more about a broad range of careers to determine the one that suits them best. November the students will create a website based on their career strategies and research on professions.



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## Uniting Efforts for "Peace One Day"

On September 21 Mardakan School #181 and Turkan Village School #119 celebrated the International Day of Peace through displaying artwork, poetry and writing essays. The event supporting UN International Day of Peace, a day of global ceasefire and non-violence begun in 2001, created excitement in both schools with song and dance.



Children from Turkan village school #119 wrote essays about what peace means to them, to their families and to the whole country. Some children expressed their thoughts on peace through drawing and exhibited their artwork in the entrance of the school. Mardakan school #181 prepared an event where the entire school participated. Children sang and recited poems about peace, some even drew chalk pictures inspired by the message of peace. Under the guidance of the music teacher, the school choir sang patriotic songs and waved the Azerbaijani flag to show the whole world that they want peace.



Principals, teachers and students of both schools united their efforts to celebrate Peace One Day and make their small contribution to peacekeeping. They were happy to get this chance to join a moment of global community and send a message from the shores of the Caspian Sea about their desire for world peace.

ACE works closely with young people in Azerbaijan and supports them in becoming a driving force behind a vision of a world united in peace.

## Six Educators Learned Online Project Facilitation through ACE Training

In order to foster professional development among teachers, ACE offers a variety of training and seminar activities that include theoretical information along with practical assignments. June 20- July 21, six ACE teachers from Baku, Sumqayit, Ismayilli, and Salyan developed their technology skills through the Second Online Facilitation Training. This summer activity was a part of ACE's distance training courses for teachers.

The participants learned about their future roles and functions as facilitators, compared online and offline facilitation and discussed ways of online project implementation using the program's web space [www.projectharmony.az/forum](http://www.projectharmony.az/forum). The teachers also examined case studies outlined in articles by professional online instructor Nancy White (<http://www.fullcirc.com>). While participating in sessions, the educators created their own draft online initiatives. "Learning facilitation skills I can accomplish my goal to create a Global Classroom and put my knowledge into practice. Now, I know how to facilitate the project and overcome problems and conflicts arising during online activities," says Shukufa Najafova, English teacher from Ismayilli School #1.

Information about the Online Facilitation training discussions can be found at [www.projectharmony.az/forum](http://www.projectharmony.az/forum) and the participants' projects at [http://edu.ace-az.org/website/school\\_projects.php](http://edu.ace-az.org/website/school_projects.php)

## ACE Teachers To Create Online Classrooms

ACE teachers understand that today's educators need web design and Internet skills to take the next steps for creating an interactive classroom. To help these teachers reach their goal, ACE provided "HTML Fundamentals" online training from August 1 to September 15. Eleven teachers and six students from Baku, Sumqayit, Salyan, Ismayilli, Quba, and Ali Bayramli (<http://www.projectharmony.az/forum>) and learned to create and employ e-resources in everyday classes.

The course facilitated by Baba Qasimov, ACE Education Coordinator, and Rashad Khanlarov, ACE Webmaster, took the participants through

essential steps of web design and administration. At the same time, the initiative promoted enhanced information exchange between the participants and helped the educators explore innovative ways of using Internet Computer Center resources in their daily classes. "At this training we found answers to many of our questions and connected with our colleagues," comments Kamal Huseynov, from Ali Bayramli School #9, "We particularly appreciate the fact that this training is the first step for us in creating online classes for our students."

Following the training, the teachers began designing their own e-tutorials, web classes, and personal websites. To make the resources available for all interested educators, ACE will place them in the Educational Web Portal (<http://edu.ace-az.org>) and will publish them on the ACE Resource CD.

## ACE Helps Put Civics into Azerbaijani "Life Skills" Curriculum

In an effort to integrate civics into Azerbaijan's national curriculum, ACE has continually provided input to Azerbaijan's Ministry of Education's "Life Skills Curriculum." In May 2006 ACE Education Coordinator participated in a panel discussion organized by the Ministry and the Institute of Educational Problems. On October 13 the panel met again to examine the second draft of the "Life Skills Curriculum" and provide further input into its development. At the meeting ACE donated materials that have been developed over the years of the program including: Comparative Civics, Practical Magic and the Civic Education Curriculum. Each of these resources contains lesson plans and online activities for students to learn what it takes to participate in society.



As a result of the meeting the Ministry and the Institute of Educational Problems has offered to coordinate its work with ACE and other programs working in the field of civics through a working group.



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## ACE announces the opening of a Small Grants Competition

The Azerbaijan Connections and Exchange Program (ACE) announces the opening of a Small Grants Competition for participants of the Youth Leadership Workshop. ACE will grant 250 (two hundred fifty) dollars for 6 projects. Projects must be submitted by December 1, 2006

The purpose of the Small Grants Competition is to award small grants for specific projects that enable participants of the program to utilize the skills gained in the Youth Leadership Workshop as tools to bring youth issues into their community. Grants will be awarded to the participants of the workshop.

Proposals will be evaluated according to the quality of project ideas, applicability to topics defined, clearly planned and formulated goals and activities, appropriateness of the budget and the ability of the individual to carry out the project.

Youth will need to work in partnership with a local NGO or community group to implement the project.

ACE cannot support projects relating to partisan political activity, charitable activity or humanitarian aid, fund-raising campaigns or projects that duplicate existing activities.

### GRANT INFORMATION

Projects may include, but are not limited to:

- public education campaigns that utilize technology
- development of a website for a social action group or around an issue of community importance
- provision of technology-related training to target community audiences

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